THIRD SECTION.

The Sun.

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OF KINGS AND SIGHTSEERS

A Discourse by Charles Battell Loomis on the Whitewashing Done by Time.

BY CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS.

WALLINGFORD, England, Sept. 15.—I can understand why we should venerate old masters, but why we should venerate old mistresses passes me. And yet time does sanctify even naughtiness here in good old England.

There have been ladies beloved of Kings of England and hated by the wives of said Kings, ladies whom, to say the least, you would not think of electing members of the Y. P. S. C. E. or the W. C. T. U. and whom Mrs. Grundy would frown upon if she met them in a drawing room to-day, ladies of the Nell Gwynn type, to take a mild example.

But Nell Gwynn with her typic sisters lived many years ago. "Ye'rs and ye'rs ago," as an Englishman would say, and time has mellowed her memory so that she has become a mildly titillating historic personage, and as such attracts the curious traveller from other lands.

To me there is something almost humorous in the thought of a deacon and a vestryman from America going on a wheeling pilgrimage to the mansion among the woods where rollicking Charles II. housed the royal favorite and queen of the stage.

Your host says: "Now we might take either one of two rides to-day, both of them of historic interest. We can go and see the seven-hundred-year-old church at Aldworth, with its recumbent statues of the knights and ladies of the De la Bêche family and its thousand-year-old yew tree, or we can take a somewhat longer ride to the house of Nell Gwynn of sainted memory."

The vestryman says, "Seems to me we've seen recumbent statues in Westminster——"

"Yes," chips in the deacon, "and the longer the ride the better the exercise. I've always been interested in poor Charles II. Seemed kind of hard he should lose his head."

"Oh, it wasn't Charles II. that lost his head—that is, he only lost figuratively," says the vestryman, "but I think that it would make an interesting ride."

"Look here," says the host, "I'd rather show you the old church. There's only a house where Nell Gwynn lived, and I believe it's occupied——"

"Suppose we flip a coin," says the vestryman.

The coin is flipped, with heads for Nell and tails for the knights and ladies, and to the delight of the Americans the choice falls on the house that Charles II. graced with his presence and wherein Nell Gwynn smiled on him.

Time has whitewashed Nell and her sisters. Give Time time enough, or if that is not sufficient give us the right kind of music, and any crime in the Decalogue is rendered interesting, until we find matinée girls at home and abroad revelling in the excesses of dear old demigods.

I heard the other day that an American rented a house for the summer simply because the agent told him that it had been the scene of a murder of a celebrated king's celebrated mistress. The American thought it would be a good place to which to bring the children. The air was good, it was near the Thames and there is no way of learning history like being on the historic spot.

His children were afraid to go up the back stairs on which the murder had been committed three hundred years before.

Now, the house was palpably not fifty years old, but the agent knew his business. No one undeceived the American and he and his family felt that they were in a way a part of the reign of Henry VIII., or whatever king it was who flourished in those times.

By the way, some of the most hallowed associations that cluster around the venerable church at Ewelme in Oxfordshire arise from the fact that dear old Henry VIII. courted Anne Boleyn hard by, and they attended service together, both of them going in for Sunday observances to a large extent.

How pretty the scene. Can we not all imagine it?

Henry breaking away from his retinue on a Sunday morning while the bells of Ewelme are answering those of Wallingford down by the river. A poppy in his buttonhole, he strides across the fields of manglewurzel to the sheltered village and makes his way through winding and narrow lanes, alongside which a fettered brook is babbling, to the seven gabled house where Anne is boarding for the summer.

Henry rings the bell in the door of the brick wall, half smothered in Virginia creeper, and sweet Anne herself comes to the window.

Henry doffs that historic cap of his and says:

"What say to a little touch of divine service this lovely morning, Anne? By the way, Anne, do you pronounce your last name Bullen or Bolinn?"

And Anne, all a-flutter at being so addressed by royalty, says:

"Say it as you will, my liege, and if you'll wait until my maid has strung my dimity bodice I'll be right glad to join you in your devotions. What do you think of the weather outlook? Is the glass falling? Shall I need an umbrella?"

"The glass is rising, Anne. It's wonderful weather for England. But I anticipate storms before long."

How prophetic the words!

Then Henry walks back and forth through the attractive village, all unwitting that eventually he is going to kill the pretty woman who is getting ready to go to church with him, and after half an hour or so Anne comes down and joins old Bluebeard, and hand in hand they walk through the colorful corn fields and are soon at the church porch.

They pass the quintet of bell ringers who jangle the bells at sight of royalty and then they sit in the front pew and await the processional. And Henry finds the lesson for the day in his own copy of the King James version of the Bible and they sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "Lead, Kindly Light" together, and as a bit of a joke the King puts a royal button into the collection pouch when it is passed to him and then when service is over and the choir boys have left the chancel the congregation rises until Henry and Anne have passed reverently out.

And they saunter through the fields and admire the Chimps where the Romans used to have an encampment, and then Anne invites him into Sunday dinner—roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, vegetable marrow and lemon squash.

It's an idyllic picture and makes me wish I'd gone in for writing history. I don't wonder that Americans—the better part of whom were English then—like to go to the little church where that King who was most insistent on marriage of any king attended service in the long ago.

There have been kings who have not confined themselves to the love of any one woman—Charles II. was a little inclined that way—but they have not been of the marrying kind. Good old Henry insisted on the ceremony.

As he said to Cardinal Wolsey on one occasion: "I may not make the best of husbands, Wolsey. There is a certain risk attending my loving of a woman, but no historian can ever arise who can truthfully say that I have not always insisted upon a full ceremony with both Mendelssohn's and the other fellow——"

"You mean Wagner, sire."

"Yes, both the wedding marches. Why, man, it is incumbent on a king to keep up a good custom—and placate Mrs. Grundy. If I had neglected to marry these Annes and Katharines marriages might fall into disuse in this tight little island. No, while I live, Wolsey, I'll keep you clergy busy earning your fees."

I'm not standing up for Henry. He did have his faults. He killed off far more wives than a self-respecting monarch should, but he upheld marriage to the end.

But, as I said before, time is a very darky for whitewashing. If in New York crowds thronged to see the house where a man or a woman was murdered (pictures of the same having appeared in the yellow press with a cross marking the spot), the respectable papers would all say editorially that only morbid or common persons ever cared for such things. They would also say that to read about such things showed a vulgar mind that needed to be fed on sensations. And in the news columns they would have a full account of the murder without the pictures.

But shove the murder back a few centuries, make the murdered man a priest, and the crowd, moved by the holiest of historical feelings—the respectable editor among it—goes to see the place where he fell. And there is a cross to mark the spot, too. And children are encouraged to read the history of the event instead of reading novels.

Yes, half the charm of sightseeing in dear old England lies in the fact that there are so many unworthies buried here and there, unworthies of both sexes, such slathers of murderers and mistresses hallowed in their tombs by kindly time.

How thankful we ought to be, my dear brethren, that we live in a time when none of the commandments is ever broken. Time won't need to hallow us of the twentieth century. We are hallowed already.

YANKEE SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

Joined the Foreign Legion in Cuba for Various Reasons.

The greatest old boy of the Foreign Legion in Cuba, says the correspondent for *Harper's Weekly*, is Capt. E. B. Webster, an elderly Yankee from Litchfield, Conn., the country of robust onions and still more robust men.

The cap'n would rather eat than fight, but, as it is often necessary to eat—well, pshaw! a man has to have the price, even if he has to fight for it. And fighting in Cuba just now is almost the best paying profession. He who lives by it can eat terrapin and canvasback—if there are still such things beyond this troubled land of garbanzos and papas frituras.

There is nothing of the fire eater about Webster. On the day after Col. Avalos had driven Pino Guerra's men out of Consolacion the cap'n and I were chatting when a cheerful Lieutenant came along and remarked, "We're going after 'em."

"Dern it all! I hope not," said the cap'n in his slow New England drawl. "Here we've been cooped up in that blamed hot train for thirty-six hours, fighting day and night, with mighty little to eat, and the rebels giving us no time to eat it. I'm tired of fighting. What I want is a long sleep and a few good meals. But, say, you ought to have been there when I got those charging rebels right on the transverse. When the gun got going I tell ye they tumbled down off their horses like a pack o' cards. Here, Lieutenant, how soon do we start?"

Cap'n Webster was a coasting skipper sailing out of Yankee ports for many years. He is heavy, stoop shouldered and "sot in his ways."

He brought a few filibuster cargoes into Cuba during the war of independence, and at the age when most men take to golf he grew so fond of fighting that he has never been able to shake off the fascinations of the game. He was United States Consul at Cardenas for a while, but as soon as this rebellion started he began to help organize the Foreign Legion.

Capt. George Reno is a New Yorker, tall, slim, pale and bashful. He came down here as a free lance war correspondent ten years ago and acquired the fighting habit. He hasn't got his company recruited yet, but when they do take the field the Azaldos had better look out.

Lieut. Adolph Fittig was a gentle real estate dealer in Havana until the war began. Then he remembered with joy the fine times he had during his military service in Germany a few years ago. Away to the winds went the real estate business, and the Herr Ober-Lieutenant burst into bloom in his uniform.

Lieut. Herbert Shockley is a small and very cheerful young fighting man from Philadelphia. When they organized the Foreign Legion he smiled and said he believed he'd take a commission. When he was firing a machine gun on the roof of the armored car and a rebel Mauser bullet went through his leg he smiled and said he believed lightning never struck twice in the same place. I wanted to photograph him as soon as he had a little leisure after the battle. He smiled.

"Better wait till I can stand up straight," he advised. "A fellow hates to look sickly in a picture."

The angriest soldier of fortune I ever saw is Gilbert H. Carr, who came in great haste all the way from West 115th street, New York, the Morningside Heights district, to take part in the game. Gen. Loynaz del Castillo made him a Captain in the rebel forces—and then this truce was declared.

"Wouldn't that irritate you?" Carr asked me. "How would you like to come all the way down here to have a little fun, and then find them giving out rain checks?"

It does seem a trifle rough on Carr. He is a slender, fair skinned, blue eyed youngster who belongs in the second company of the Twelfth Regiment, New York National Guard, when he's at home. He has fought in South Africa and in a few South American revolutions.

THE RICHEST OF ALL WOMEN.

Cardinal Rampolla's Account of Saint Melania the Younger.

Cardinal Rampolla, Secretary of State to Pope Leo XIII., discovered among the manuscripts of the Escurial when he was Papal Nuncio at Madrid, a biography of Saint Melania the Younger, which he has lately translated, edited and had printed at the Vatican press. What follows is an abridgment of his narrative.

The author of this biography was named Gerontius. From A. D. 405 until 439 he was in the service of and daily association with Melania, and after her death he succeeded her as the head of a monastery which she founded. An eyewitness, he tells who Melania was, the amount of her fortune and what she did with it.

Melania and her husband were both Christians and wished to follow literally the Saviour's precept: "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." They therefore resolved to devote their immense possessions to the cause of Christ.

History records that during the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century after Christ certain patrician Roman families amassed enormous wealth. Melania's fortune surpassed all others and consisted of a villa on the Cœlian at Rome which enclosed porticoed courts, a circus, a hippodrome and immense gardens. Its buildings were decorated with paintings, mosaics, statues, sculpture and precious marbles, cared for and served by gardeners, butchers, bakers, cooks, waiting women, valets and all the host of necessary slaves.

A rural domain at the fifth milestone on the Appian way three miles in circumference—its ruins have yielded many marbles to the Vatican museum.

An estate on the northern coast of Sicily tilled by eight thousand slaves.

Estates in Africa, Numidia, Mauritania, in Britain, in Spain and in Gaul with enough slaves to cultivate them.

Her yearly revenues, it is estimated, amounted to scores of millions of dollars. They may well have exceeded the civil list of any emperor or potentate who ever lived, and were probably greater than any other woman ever possessed.

It is not known what use Melania made of her wealth before she decided to rid herself of it; her biographer begins his story only when she had so resolved.

Melania found it very difficult to follow the command of her Master; public opinion, custom and above all the law of the Empire forbade. The Roman law then prohibited, except under certain restrictions, the alienation of real estate. Then, when this husband and wife decided to obey Christ's command they were minors and they could not sell their real estate without a decree, ratified by the Roman Senate.

At the instigation of a brother-in-law the slaves of the property on the Via Appia rose in insurrection, insisting that they preferred slavery with its sure maintenance to freedom with an uncertain future, and they were only pacified when made over to the brother-in-law with a gratuity of three gold pennies apiece.

How hard it was to become poor! An imperial edict alone could overcome the opposition of relatives, of the law and of the Senate. This Melania secured through the favor of Serena, who was a niece of the Emperor Theodosius and his adopted daughter; the wife of Stilicho and the mother-in-law of Honorius, the son and successor of Theodosius. For many years Stilicho and Serena had been the actual rulers of the western half of the Roman Empire.

Public rumor, which had been busy with Melania's future, blaming or praising as prejudice or religious bias swayed, had aroused the Queen's curiosity and its object had been several times bidden to the imperial palace, commands which had invariably been disobeyed. In the spring of A. D. 404 the disobedient one remembered that the imperial power could unmake as well as make laws and could smooth her difficult road to poverty.

Accompanied by her husband, several Bishops and Gerontius, who chronicles the event, she went to the Palatine. Her train included slaves bearing many and costly presents, the customary offerings to the powerful and their court. Closely veiled and wearing a dress of very cheap material, the suppliant said to those who remonstrated with her:

"I shall not uncover the head which I have covered for Christ's sake; I shall not change the garment which I have put on for my Saviour's glory."

Her humility had its immediate reward, for Serena herself came forward to meet and greet her, seated her at her side on the golden throne, and calling her court around her, said:

"Behold this woman, who could be surrounded by all that wealth could buy, yet for Christ's sake renounces all the vanities of this world."

Serena herself declined the gifts offered to her, and forbade any of her courtiers or servants to accept any. At her request the Emperor at once gave orders to the rulers of his provinces to sell Melania's estates and remit the proceeds to her.

"We were all stupefied with amazement," comments Gerontius.

Melania and her husband left Rome before Alaric captured it and went to their Sicilian estate. The troubles of the times delayed the sale of their possessions for years. As fast as they could they spent their wealth in building and endowing churches, monasteries, nunneries, hospitals, and endowing and adorning their altars with vessels of gold and of silver.

They relieved the necessities of thousands of the poor and needful, sending vessels and messengers with money and necessaries for them and to the hermits and monks of Egypt, Jerusalem and Antioch. After twenty-seven years of continuous effort they had at last reduced their once colossal fortune to the remnant of a small estate in Spain. They then went to Jerusalem, where they ended their days and were buried in a monastic retreat which they had built and endowed.

Gerontius never could give the number of slaves that Melania at one time owned, but stated that in two years eight thousand were liberated. He states that her annual income was one hundred and twenty thousand pounds weight of gold, equal to more than thirty millions of United States gold coin, and, taking the purchasing power of specie in the sixth century A. D., fully equal, it is estimated, to $175,000,000 to-day.

A Vegetable Hair.

From the London Globe.

One of the most interesting though perhaps least known industries of Algeria is the production of vegetable hair. This hair or fibre is made from the dwarf palm which grows in large quantities along the coasts of Algeria.

A few years ago this plant was looked upon as a useless weed; now it has been found to contain a most useful fibre and is largely sought after. This fibre is an excellent substitute for horsehair and is in great demand among upholsterers, mattress makers, harness makers and carriage builders on the Continent for the cheaper class of goods.